

SWEET INSPIRATIONS

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Tribute to A Dear Friend, Swim Coach & Mentor

Dreams can be quite powerful. Several months ago I had a dream where, at a special dinner event, I paid tribute to my high school swim coach, Skip Griffin, a man who offered me stability in those turbulent teen years. Immediately I awoke, realizing 40 years had passed since I had last talked to him. I realized that to say “thanks” in person is far superior to simply dreaming about it. Not an easy person to find in his retirement years, after months of trying to track him down (I only knew him by his nickname), we not only chatted by phone, but I made a trip back to New England to pay him a visit, where, like my fortuitous dream, I could say thanks to him in person. Skip was not only my swim coach, he was a dear friend at a time in my life when I didn’t have many. While many sports coaches serve in the role as a secondary parental figure, Skip was more like a spirit guide to me, teaching values, good sportsmanship, and insights regarding many of life’s difficult lessons. He would often begin explaining things with these words, “To make a long story short...” and end every conversation with the words, “God bless.” I arrived the first week of May at his house in New Hampshire to find him not well. He shared with me that he only had months to live. In the course of our visit we chatted about Ireland (his ancestral homeland... Dingle, to be exact), members of the swim team and as much of 40 years that we could cram into three hours, before I had to depart to catch a plane and fly home. The timing of my dream was very significant, for about the time of my dream, he was diagnosed with a chronic disease. Always the teacher (he was also my Chemistry instructor), Skip had one more lesson to share; how to die with grace and dignity. By the time you read this, he may have passed, but his spirit remains forever strong, and he will always be remembered as a bright light on the planet.



Skip with his wife, Pauline

Springtime in Tuscany: Spirit of Tuscany Tour

I have just returned from the 2014 *Spirit of Tuscany* tour and I have to say, it was the best one yet. We arrived in Florence and after a short time there, we traveled south to the outskirts of the walled city of Pienza. Our 5-star Tuscan villa was a fully restored 16th century farmhouse. Simple elegance. Among the highlights was a visit to Cicita Di Bagnoregio, a walled city upon a hill that is only accessible by a footbridge. Another highlight was an authentic Tuscan cooking class. May is considered poppy season and the Tuscan countryside did not disappoint us. We returned to Florence to enjoy one last incredible meal before we headed back home, well rested and quite inspired. Special thanks to my guide Gail Hecko for all of her help in making this tour such a success. Perhaps not included among the highlights was Kim Kardashian's wedding which occurred during the first part of our trip, but the fireworks were pretty good. Here is a photo essay of the trip. Enjoy!



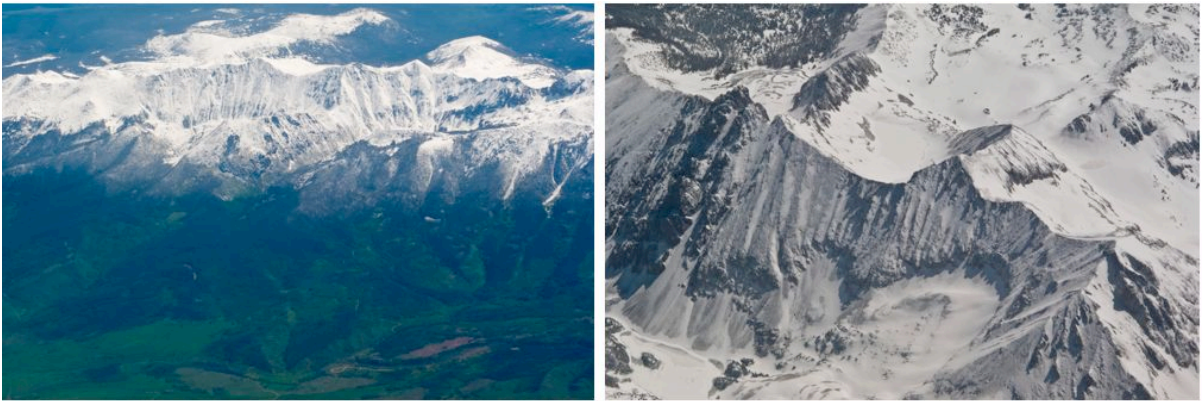


A View from The Window Seat

When I travel, I try to book a window seat (away from the sunlight's glare) so I can look out at the world and when possible, take a few photos. I was quite lucky when flying home from Italy to see the mountains of Greenland out my window as well as Mt Hood, while flying to Portland for the AHNA conference. I am constantly reminded that indeed, it is a beautiful world.



Mount Hood with Mt Shasta in the background, 35,000 ft over Greenland



High over Wyoming and the Wind River Range

2014 Retreat on Lake Como, Italy next May

Tuscany is nice (so is Venice and Cinque Terra), but for decades I have wanted to see the Lake Region of Italy and become mesmerized by the snow-capped mountains that surround the alpine resorts of Como and Bellagio. Next year's Spirit of Italy tour will move to Lake Como as plans are underway to return to Italy for the Eat, Walk Meditate Workshop retreat next May. Details soon. But in the mean time, if interested please let me know and mark your calendars for the last 10 days of May 2015



Stunning views of the lake region of Italy

Fall Mountain Retreat Returns to Vail this Year

I am happy to report that I have just signed the contract to return to the Sonnenalp Resort Hotel in Vail for the 16th Annual Fall Mountain Retreat to be held Oct 10-12th 2014 (Columbus Day weekend). Mark your calendars for what promises to be a great and most memorable weekend of great information, guided meditations, soul-searching exercises, awesome Saturday night concert (Dan Sebranek) and a wonderful respite from the world. I am also delighted to announce that our Friday night entertainment will include some fantastic traditional Irish music by Jessie Burns (formerly with Gaelic Storm and Annie Serotniak. Spots are filling up fast so if you are interested, please fill out a registration form (the brochure with the registration form can be found on the events page of my website). Many thanks...



Jessie Burns on Fiddle, and Singer/Songwriter, Dan Sebranek on Guitar

That's all the news that's fit to print this time around... Thanks, as always for keeping in touch, and I hope to cross paths down the road...

Best wishes and inner peace,

"Luke"

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